

lower-income and female workers are much less likely to be participants in pension plans, I believe we must direct our focus to these workers who often toil at the margins of pension coverage. Specific efforts are needed to help women secure the pension benefits which all manner of their contributions have earned for them.

The Pension Rights Center, a nonprofit consumer rights organization dedicated to promoting retirement income security, has expressed its "strong support" for the Retirement Opportunity Expansion Act of 2001, noting that this legislation would "encourage the creation of new private retirement plans for those lacking such coverage, particularly low and moderate wage earners." WISER, a nonprofit organization that seeks to ensure that poverty among older women will be reduced by improving the opportunities for women to secure retirement benefits, stated that they are "extremely gratified" about the introduction of this bill. They have urged support for the bill in order to "improve the alarming retirement situation for older women . . . where millions of women are retiring into poverty, despite a lifetime of work and caregiving for their families."

Earlier initiatives provided a starting point to improve the pension system we have. It is now time to develop the pension system that we need. I would urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this legislation and ensuring its passage during the 107th Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I am attaching a summary of the provisions of the "Retirement Opportunity Expansion Act of 2001."

THE RETIREMENT OPPORTUNITY EXPANSION ACT OF 2001 SUMMARY

TITLE I: EXPANSION OF PENSION COVERAGE TO WORKERS WITHOUT PENSIONS

The purpose of this section is to provide an incentive for low- and middle-income individuals to save for retirement.

Section 101: This section would provide a refundable tax credit to low and middle income workers of up to 50% of annual contributions made to a traditional, deductible IRA or an employer-sponsored pension plan (e.g., 401(k), 403(b) or 457 plans).

Eligible contributions could not exceed the maximum annual allowable contributions to a deductible IRA. The credit would be phased out as the income of the eligible taxpayer increases. (Eligible taxpayers defined as married filing joint returns would receive the maximum credit on AGI of \$30,000 and the credit would be phased out at \$50,000; head of household returns would receive the maximum credit on AGI of \$22,500 and the credit would be phased out at \$37,500; single and married filing separate returns would receive the maximum credit on AGI of \$15,000 and the credit would be phased out at \$25,000.)

An eligible taxpayer would be required to earn at least \$5,000 during the tax year and to have attained the age of 18 by the close of the tax year and could not qualify as a dependent child of another taxpayer or be a full-time student.

TITLE II: EXPANSION OF COVERAGE TO LOW-WAGE WORKERS

The purpose of this section is to expand pension participation among lower-paid workers.

Section 201: This section would allow contributions of up to \$2,000 made to an IRA through payroll deduction generally to be excluded from an employee's income (and

not to be reported on the employee's form W-2) if the taxpayer is otherwise eligible for a deductible IRA.

TITLE III: IMPROVEMENT OF PENSION COVERAGE FOR WOMEN

The purpose of these sections is primarily to expand pension benefits to women and individuals who have spent time out of the workforce to raise children or care for parents or spouses.

Section 301: This section would require pension plans to provide the option of a "joint and 3/4 survivor annuity" for participants who so elect. Under the option, a widowed spouse would receive 75 percent of the pension benefit received during the life of the other spouse.

Section 302: This section would require spousal consent on 401(k) distributions of more than 10% of the value of the account.

Section 303: This section would provide full vesting of pension benefits upon the death or disability of the plan participant.

Section 304: This section would prohibit plans from making changes in 401(k) investments or giving lump sum distributions during the 90-day period from the date the plan is notified of the preparation for a domestic relations order.

Section 305: This section would require the Secretary of Labor to conduct a study to determine the participation rate of women and other underrepresented minorities in pension plans and to make recommendations to the Congress for way to increase participation among these groups of workers.

Section 306: This section would count family and medical leave time hours of service for purposes of meeting pension participation, vesting and accrual thresholds.

TITLE IV: INCENTIVES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES TO OFFER PENSION BENEFITS

The purpose of this section is to encourage small businesses to offer retirement benefits to their employees.

Section 401: This section would give businesses with 100 or fewer employees a tax credit of up to 50 percent of employer contributions made to a pension plan during the first three years.

Section 402: This section would establish the Secure Money or Annuity Retirement Trusts (SMART). SMART plans are simplified, tax-favored pension plans that combine the features of both defined benefit and defined contribution plans. The plans would provide participants with a minimum guaranteed benefit at retirement.

Section 403: This section would simplify the definition of "highly compensated employee."

ATTACKS ON INDIAN PARLIAMENT

HON. FRANK PALLONE, JR.

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 13, 2001

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, very early this morning, a suicide squad of six terrorists attacked the Indian Parliament. Prime Minister Vajpayee and Members of the Cabinet and Parliament were thankfully safe. Unfortunately, seven people, including guards and workers, were killed and at least 17 people were injured at the hands of one suicide bomber and other assailants equipped with grenades and guns.

The United States has come forward and declared this raid "an outrageous act of ter-

rorism". Not only was this an attack on India, it was a brutal attack on the largest symbol of democracy worldwide. I am shocked and appalled at this extreme act of terrorism and I express my deepest regards towards India at this time.

India is a country that has been sadly afflicted for 50 years by the loss of countless innocent citizens at the hands of cold-blooded murder by terrorists. For the past decade, India has fallen victim to terrorist attacks by groups that belong to the same terrorist network responsible for the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

Since September 11th, there has been a flurry of terrorist attacks in Kashmir taking place on a daily basis. On October 1st in particular, a suicide car bomb exploded in front of the Jammu and Kashmir State Assembly while it was in session and 38 people were killed. Since this incident, a clear pattern of cross-border terrorism in Kashmir has manifested and Islamic terrorist groups are to be blamed for these terrorist activities.

The atrocious attack on the Indian Parliament falls within this familiar pattern of attacks by active terrorist forces in Kashmir. The suicide attack on democracy in Srinagar was clearly a precursor to this morning's attack on democracy in New Delhi. However, terrorist groups have crossed the line this time. This attack on diversity, vibrancy, equality, democracy and all characteristics of India's open society, goes too far.

The parallel that can be drawn between the United States and India at this time is remarkable. The U.S. and India are not only friends, but they are also two nations that serve together as pillars of commitment to democracy. The U.S. was brutally attacked by terrorists in an attempt to break down our democratic ideals and we are retaliating with a successful war effort in Afghanistan. Similarly, the attack on Indian Parliament is impetus for India's retaliation against the relentless terrorism taking place in Kashmir and now in New Delhi. These punitive actions undoubtedly will help in the global war on terrorism and the current effort to eliminate the Al-Qaeda terrorist network. The citizens of India deserve to live their lives without violence and terror. The Government of India deserves to exercise its strong democratic ideals.

HONORING THE IDA TOWNSHIP VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

HON. JOHN D. DINGELL

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 13, 2001

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the patriotic citizens of the Ida Township Volunteer Fire Department, which has served Ida and the surrounding area for over 63 years. Mr. Speaker, these local Michigan heroes stand ready to put their lives on the line in service to their community. They are a brave, professional and dedicated group, providing a lifeline to all whose lives are in danger.

The tragic events of September 11, 2001, have brought to light the important role firefighters and other first-responders play in protecting this country from numerous threats.